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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 001239

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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: GUINEAN POLICE SEIZE 278 KILOS OF COCAINE OVER TEN MONTHS

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The new director of Guinea,s police anti-drug unit reports that his unit has seized 278 kilos of cocaine since January 2007. The director said that Guinea,s drug trafficking problem has worsened significantly in recent years and the anti-drug unit is ill equipped to effectively stem the flow of cocaine. He acknowledged that corruption is a major problem, but did not have a clear strategy for addressing it. Eager for any kind of technical assistance, training and/or equipment, the director said he would be happy to collaborate with the USG to improve Guinea,s drug interdiction program. END SUMMARY.

COCAINE BUTTONS AND VANISHING KILOS

¶2. (SBU) On October 31, poloff and RSO met with the newly appointed Director of Guinea,s police anti-drug unit, Bakary Thermite Mara, who had been reassigned from his previous position as Director of Interpol. RSO congratulated Mara for recent successful crackdowns including the arrest of four Nigerians who were apprehended after police found that they had manufactured buttons out of two grams of cocaine each and then attached them to clothing, reportedly to be used to transport the drugs out of the country. RSO also congratulated Mara for the July arrest of several police officers who had stolen 14 kilos of seized cocaine and used the proceeds to purchase four new vehicles.

LET ME SHOW YOU THE EVIDENCE

¶3. (C) Mara was eager to share the details of another successful drug bust that he had overseen earlier that morning. My boss doesn,t even know about this one yet,8 he said. Mara said that airport police had detained a Ghanaian, who was booked on an Air Maroc flight to Spain, on suspicion of drug trafficking. As he called for his deputy to bring in the evidence, Mara said that the hunch turned out to be true when the Ghanaian later voided the cocaine he had swallowed. The deputy came in a few minutes later and dumped the contents of a plastic bag onto the desk) approximately 20 capsules, three-inches long and one-inch in diameter, full of cocaine. When asked about the quantity, Mara said it represented at least a kilo and was probably worth \$40,000 (COMMENT. If it was in fact a kilo, the actual value is probably closer to \$100,000).

278 KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE SEIZED IN 2007

14. (C) At poloff request, Mara agreed to share his office,s statistics on recent drug busts, which he made available to the Embassy a few days later. The report dates back to January 2007 and includes 31 separate cases. Of these 31 cases, 15 involved seizure of cocaine totaling approximately 278 kilograms. Most were relatively small seizures, but there were three larger busts: a July 22nd case involving 51 kg, a July 13 case involving 182 kg, and a September 13 case involving 23 kg. The remaining 16 cases involved marijuana. While drug totals were listed, there was no information as to how much money was seized in connection with these drug cases.

WE ARE NOT INCORRUPTIBLE

15. (C) Referring to the July case involving the arrest of police officials, poloff asked Mara to discuss his strategy for addressing corruption within the anti-drug unit. Mara said that he had been appointed to the position specifically because his bosses have utmost confidence in him. The administration knows there is corruption here,, he added. Mara said that drug trafficking naturally comes with lots of money, guns and women which makes it particularly attractive to low-paid police officials. Referring to himself, he said we cannot say that we are not corruptible, but maybe less so than the rest.,

16. (SBU) Mara defined corruption not only in financial

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terms, but also as a lack of moral values. He said that it is important to ensure that officers understand their moral responsibility as law enforcement officials in order to fully appreciate the dangers of corrupt behavior. RSO agreed with Mara and said that it is important that this mentality of morality be passed onto new officers, especially as Guinea looks to develop its new police academy.

GROWING DRUG TRAFFICKING PROBLEM

17. (SBU) When asked whether he has seen an increase in drug trafficking in Guinea, Mara said that drugs have been an issue in Guinea for a long time. He clarified that Guinea,s fight against drugs began in 1976 when the government created an office to deal with drug abuse and inebriation. However, Mara acknowledged that the magnitude of Guinea,s drug problem is much bigger now than it was even a few years ago. He added that aside from its mounting cocaine trafficking problem, significant quantities of marijuana are grown in Guinea for local consumption.

LOOKING FOR A BETTER IMAGE

18. (SBU) Mara ended the meeting with a tour of the anti-crime unit,s office facilities, which were comprised of a number of bare offices, most without even a desk or a chair. They did have a new bunkhouse and the toilet facilities were under renovation. The Director,s office was well-furnished with new-looking furniture, a computer and a television. While walking embassy staff to their car, Mara emphasized that any material assistance would be more than welcome. He pointed to a dilapidated jeep and said &we just aren,t projecting the right image when we do a big drug bust and put the traffickers in the jeep...only to have to get back out and push the vehicle in order to get the engine going.8

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Other contacts have indicated that corruption is rampant within the police anti-drug unit. According to sources, seized cocaine is often stolen by police officers and resold with the proceeds distributed up the chain of command. The Minister of Interior and Security was seen on a national television broadcast burning some of the seized cocaine, but one contact told poloff that the burning was more symbolic and only represented a token quantity of the cocaine that had actually been seized. A contact with an NGO prisoner advocacy organization co-located at the Conakry prison, said that many police officers have brand new vehicles and other suspiciously expensive items, things that they could not possibly afford on their salaries. The chief police commissar of the Conakry prison, who was sitting in a well-equipped office with new furniture and a television and computer, told poloff that he had over 300,000 euros sitting in his safe that he was not authorized to show.

¶10. (C) The new chief of the anti-drug unit has his work cut out for him. In his previous position as the head of Interpol, he was generally very cooperative with the Embassy. The general inadequacy of Guinea,s law enforcement agency, coupled with rampant corruption, make it ineffective in stemming the growing drug trafficking problem. Embassy is exploring possible avenues of assistance. END COMMENT.
CARTER